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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004147

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W, INR/EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2025

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SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION SCENESETTER: KAOHSIUNG COUNTY

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: WITH AN AIR OF EXUBERANT CONFIDENCE POURING FROM ITS HEADQUARTERS IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY, THE DPP BELIEVES THE COUNTY MAGISTRATE ELECTION IS ALREADY SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED. THE INCUMBENT HAS A NEAR 70% APPROVAL RATING AND AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, AT THE KMT HEADQUARTERS, THE BUSY ATMOSPHERE AND WORDS OF HOPEFUL OPTIMISM ABOUT YOUNG KMT CANDIDATE LIN YI-SHI CANNOT HIDE THE SIGHS AND LOCAL KMT'S DESPONDENCY ABOUT TAIWAN'S LACK OF DIRECTION AND THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE LOCAL KAOHSIUNG POPULATION TO BE SO TAKEN WITH THE "BEN TU" VIEW OF THE WORLD DESPITE THAT IT PROMISES ONLY RUIN FOR TAIWAN. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) A VISIT TO EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TSAI YUNG-CHANG OF THE DPP'S KAOHSIUNG OFFICE LEFT AIT/K WITH THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE DPP HAS ALREADY WON THIS RACE. ACCORDING TO TSAI, KAOHSIUNG IS SO SOLIDLY GREEN AND KMT CANDIDATE LIN IS SO OUT OF TOUCH WITH LOCAL REALITIES THAT THE DPP DISMISSES ANY KMT HOPE OF WINNING. DISCUSSING LIN'S WEAKNESSES, TSAI POINTED OUT, LIN HAS NO CONNECTIONS TO THE COUNTY'S GRASSROOT VOTERS AND, ALTHOUGH A POPULAR FACE ON NATIONAL TELEVISION BROADCASTS, LIN CAN ONLY ADDRESS NATIONAL ISSUES, SUCH AS THE ARMS PROCUREMENT BILL, AND OFTEN CRITICIZES THE DPP AND ITS SUPPORTERS IN ORDER TO IMPRESS PAN-BLUE VOTERS. LIN'S ISSUES AND DISRESPECTFUL ATTITUDE IN A SOLIDLY GREEN COUNTY JUST WILL NOT RESONATE WITH LOCAL VOTERS, CLAIMS TSAI. TSAI NOTES THAT MAGISTRATE YANG, WHO KNOWS THE LOCAL ISSUES AND PEOPLE, WILL CAMPAIGN FOR HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ONGOING PRIORITY: THE NEED FOR INCREASED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY.

13. (C) NEITHER IS THE DPP WORRIED ABOUT DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CHEN ADMINISTRATION OR THE "MA YING-JEOU EFFECT." TSAI BOLDLY CLAIMED THAT CHAIRMAN MA HAS ABSOLUTELY NO INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE OF KAOHSIUNG COUNTY. IN ADDITION, THIS PARTY STALWART NOTED THAT IF PEOPLE ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES THEY WILL ELECT A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN 2008, BUT KAOHSIUNG COUNTY VOTERS WILL NOT SEE ISSUES OF PARTY CORRUPTION OR POOR PERFORMANCE OF THE CHEN ADMINISTRATION AS HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE MAGISTERIAL ELECTION. EVEN IF THE KAOHSIUNG MASS TRANSIT CORPORATION'S (KMRT) CORRUPTION SCANDAL EVENTUALLY TOUCHES FORMER KAOHSIUNG MAYOR, NOW PREMIER HSIEH CHANG-TING, KAOHSIUNG COUNTY DPP VOTERS WILL WAIT UNTIL THE FINAL PROSECUTION REPORT IS IN BEFORE THEY BLAME THE PREMIER FOR WRONG-DOING.

14. (C) ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, THE KMT KAOHSIUNG COUNTY CHAIRMAN LIU CHIN-TIEN IS GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS CANDIDATE'S CHANCES. CANDIDATE LIN YI-SHI IS A YOUNG FACE, CHARACTERIZED BY LIU AS A RISING STAR, IN THE KMT. LIU SEES LIN'S REGULAR TV APPEARANCES ON TALK SHOWS AS USEFUL EXPOSURE TO INCREASE HIS POPULARITY. IN FACT, LIU POINTED OUT, LIN'S POPULARITY IS INCREASING FROM A BEGINNING RATE OF ONLY 9% WEEKS AGO TO 29% IN THE LATEST TVBS POLL. THE KMT IS EAGERLY AWAITING THE NEXT MID-OCTOBER POLL RESULTS TO SEE IF THE STEADY INCLINE CONTINUES.

15. (C) SINCE LIN IS A YOUNG KAOHSIUNG NATIVE AND A VERY "CLEAN" CANDIDATE, THE KAOHSIUNG KMT IS LINKING LIN WITH THE IMAGE OF CHAIRMAN MA YING-JEOU AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY AND EXPECTS TO SEE CHAIRMAN MA MORE THAN ONCE IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY TO CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF LIN. ACCORDING TO LIU, LIN VERY EASILY FITS INTO THE REFORM MESSAGE SENT OUT BY KMT MEMBERS VIA THE ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN MA. BESIDES THAT, THE KMT BELIEVES THAT IF THEY CAN MOBILIZE THE YOUTH VOTE IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY, HOPEFULLY PUSHING THE TURN OUT RATE TO ABOVE 75%, THAT LIN HAS A FIGHTING CHANCE TO WIN THIS ELECTION. TO DO THAT, THE KMT HOPES TO DRAG MAGISTRATE YANG'S NAME AND ACTIONS INTO THE KMRT SCANDAL, WHICH, THE KMT CLAIMS, YANG AVOIDED ENTIRELY EVEN THOUGH THE THAI LABOR CAMPS WERE IN COUNTY TERRITORY. AS SUCH, ISLAND WIDE DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CHEN ADMINISTRATION CAN BE "BROUGHT HOME" TO KAOHSIUNG COUNTY, POSSIBLY INSPIRING MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO COME OUT AND CAST A VOTE FOR CHANGE. WITHOUT THE YOUTH VOTE, HOWEVER, LIU BELIEVES THE LOCAL DPP MACHINE CAN DEFEAT THEM BY USING UNDERGROUND RADIO STATIONS AND RALLIES THAT WILL STRESS THE "BEN TU" ISSUE IN ORDER TO RALLY THE MASSES AROUND MAGISTRATE YANG.

16. (C) COMMENT: WHILE THE DPP WILL FOCUS ON CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES, THE KMT SEES BAD CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND CORRUPTION AS THE MAJOR ISSUES IN THE LOCAL CAMPAIGN. WHILE THE DPP IS ALREADY CELEBRATING THIS EASY WIN, THE KMT IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY HAS NOT LOST HOPE IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A LONG SHOT IN THIS PARTICULAR RACE: THE ABILITY OF SOME MUD-SLINGING ALONG WITH CHAIRMAN MA'S COATTAILS TO SWEEP THEM TO AN UNEXPECTED VICTORY. END COMMENT.  
PAAL